

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 186505 TOSEC 080199
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 186505 TOSEC 080199

EXDIS, FOR ATHERTON FROM SOBER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PGOV, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: SENDING LEBANESE TROOPS INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON

YOU WILL RECALL THAT SENATOR STONE AND MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE
STAFF HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DEPLOYMENT IN THE
SOUTH OF ELEMENTS OF WHAT USED TO BE THE SO-CALLED
"VANGUARDS" IN THE BEKAA VALLEY, FEARING THAT THIS FORCE
IS STILL SUBJECT TO SYRIAN CONTROL OR INFLUENCE. WHILE
BEGIN REPORTEDLY TOLD STONE HE HAD NO PROBLEM WITH THIS
UNIT, OTHER ISRAELIS MIGHT RETAIN CONCERNS. FOLLOWING IS
UP-DATED INFO ON SO-CALLED "VANGUARDS" AND KHOURY'S PLANS
FOR MOVING ELEMENTS OF THREE UNITS INTO SOUTH:

-- SO-CALLED "VANGUARDS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY" WERE
ABOLISHED ON MAY 7, WHEN THEY WERE INTEGRATED INTO
REGULAR UNITS OF LEBANESE ARMY AND ALL SYRIAN SUPPORT TO
THEM CEASED AT THAT TIME, IF NOT BEFORE. THESE AND OTHER
LEBANESE UNITS IN LEBANON HAVE TO COOPERATE, OF COURSE,
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PAGE 02 STATE 186505 TOSEC 080199

WITH THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE.

-- KHOURY IS NOW PREPARING TO SEND ELEMENTS OF THREE UNITS
TO SOUTHERN LEBANON. THESE UNITS ARE:

(A) THE FIRST INFANTRY BRIGADE, NOW STATIONED IN ABLAH, IN
THE BEKAA, COMMANDED BY MAJOR IBRAHIM SHAHINE (SHIA).

THIS UNIT IS APPROX 1500 MEN, 65 PERCENT MUSLIM (MOSTLY SHIA) AND 35 PERCENT CHRISTIANS. THIS FIRST BRIGADE WAS BROUGHT UNDER FULL COMMAND OF CENTRAL LEBANESE ARMY COMMAND AT YARZE ON MAY 7, 1977 BY GENERAL KHOURY AND IS NOW CONSIDERED FULLY RESPONSIVE TO HIS AND PRESIDENT SARKIS' ORDERS. THIS BRIGADE IS PART OF BEKAA MILITARY REGION COMMANDED BY GEN. KHOURY'S BROTHER COL. MICHEL AND INCLUDES AIR FORCE UNITS AT RAYAK (WHICH ARE MOSTLY CHRISTIAN). THERE ARE NO PLANS TO USE AIR FORCE UNITS IN THE SOUTH.

(B) A CHRISTIAN UNIT FROM THE ARMY BARRACKS AT SARBA, NEAR JUNIEH. THIS BARRACKS IS COMMANDED BY COL. ANTOINE LAHAD, A STAUNCH MARONITE, AS ARE MOST OF HIS TROOPS. MANY OF THESE TROOPS FOUGHT UNDER GENERAL (THEN COL) KHOURY IN THE BATTLE OF CHEKKA AND KHOURY CONSIDERS THAT HE CAN GET A BATTALION THAT WILL BE RESPONSIVE AND LOYAL TO HIM AND PRESIDENT SARKIS FROM THIS BRIGADE.

(C) A MIXED UNIT FROM THE SIDON AREA. THIS UNIT, WHICH IS JUST BEING FORMED, IS COMMANDED BY MAJOR OASIM SIBLINI (SHIA) AND IS ABOUT 65 PERCENT CHRISTIAN. GEN. KHOURY THINKS THAT ONCE IT IS EQUIPPED AND TRAINED, THIS UNIT COULD BE PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE BECAUSE ALL THE TROOPS COME FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON. HOWEVER, IT WILL PROBABLY TAKE SOME TIME TO GET THIS UNIT ORGANIZED.
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PAGE 03 STATE 186505 TOSEC 080199

-- GENERAL KHOURY BELIEVES HE NEEDS TWO MONTHS TO PREPARE THESE UNITS PROPERLY FOR THEIR MISSION IN THE SOUTH BUT HE MAY BE ORDERED TO MOVE SOME TROOPS THERE SOONER TO POLICE THE CEASE-FIRE IN THAT AREA. THAT IS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN ABOUT TWO WEEKS AS PHASE THREE OF THE CHTAURA AGREEMENT. CHRISTOPHER

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